

June 30 - Water Reliability Coalition Supports Water Purification Pilot Project



Broad-based affiliation sees need to explore safe, reliable options for drinking water in San Diego

San Diego, Calif. – Thursday, June 30, 2011 –The Water Reliability Coalition, a broad-based affiliation of environmental, consumer, business, labor, development, taxpayer and technical organizations, supports the City of San Diego's pilot project to explore the purification of wastewater into drinking water.

Today, City of San Diego Mayor Jerry Sanders announced the kick-off of the year-long testing period, which will examine the feasibility of treating wastewater to drinking water standards for the City of San Diego.

"A stable, dependable supply of water is critical for San Diego's growing community," said co-chair Lani Lutar of the San Diego County Taxpayers Association. "The coalition members support investment in the water purification pilot project because it is anticipated to result in a local, drought-proof water supply source that will help decrease the city's reliance on expensive, imported water."

To perform the pilot study, the city built a test facility at the North City Water Reclamation Plant, where the city purifies wastewater into so-called "reclaimed" water that can be used for industrial landscaping and other non-drinking purposes. The new facility will purify this water even further, so clean it could be safe enough to drink. Currently, the facility will pump the finished product back into the reclaimed water system for industrial use. This year-long testing of one million gallons a day will provide scientific data that will help determine whether the process is clean and safe.

If the results of the pilot project gain approval from the California Department of Public Health, then San Diego's leadership will vote whether to pursue wastewater recycling as a means to augment San Diego's water supply. If they vote in favor of wastewater recycling, then the project will enter into the next phase, which includes building a full-scale Advanced Water Purification Facility adjacent to the North City Water Reclamation Plant. Additionally, the City would build a 23-mile pipeline to transport the highly purified water to the San Vicente Reservoir, where the water would blend with San Diego's alternate sources of water and then get treated once again before reaching the homes of San Diego.

"We're not the first city to explore this safe water supply option," said co-chair Ms. Gabriel

Solmer of San Diego Coastkeeper. "In fact, in Southern California, the Irvine Ranch Water District has distributed recycled water for over thirty years and Orange County has added highly purified recycled wastewater to groundwater supplies that residents use as a source of drinking water. This technology is used around the world."

The Coalition believes that recycling water for potable use can be an important part of San Diego's water supply portfolio diversification. In the San Diego region, potable reuse could provide one of the most cost-effective and environmentally friendly options to enhance local water supplies.

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The Water Reliability Coalition is a broad-based affiliation of environmental, consumer, business, labor, development, taxpayer and technical organizations that have come together to support exploration of Indirect Potable Reuse as a potential strategy to develop a safe, reliable, sustainable & cost-effective local water supply.

Coalition members include: BLOCOM; Building Industry Association; Building Owners and Managers Association, San Diego Chapter; Citizens Coordinate for Century 3; Coastal Environmental Rights Foundation; Empower San Diego; Endangered Habitats League; Environmental Health Coalition; Friends of Infrastructure; Industrial Environmental Association; National Association of Industrial and Office Properties, San Diego Chapter; San Diego and Imperial Counties Labor Council; San Diego Audubon Society; San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation; San Diego Coastkeeper; San Diego County Taxpayers Association; San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce; San Diego River Park Foundation; Surfrider Foundation, San Diego Chapter; Sustainability Alliance of Southern California; Utility Consumers' Action Network